



January 31, 2003

## City again seeking proposals for creek

*Council says leave Kottinger Creek setting natural*

*by Dolores Fox Ciardelli*

The City Council voted last week to seek new proposals to develop a plan for Kottinger Creek, this time with a focus on restoring the creek to its natural state.

"I really want to see us get back on track," said Mayor Tom Pico. "We're here because the Friends of Kottinger Creek said we have a problem. I'm not interested in redesigning the park. I love it the way it is and want to make sure we protect the habitat and the watershed to make sure critters who live there continue to live there."

The matter was on the council agenda to approve an agreement to hire Wolfe Mason Associates to provide a master plan for the Kottinger Community Park creek area for \$73,000. Wolfe Mason was unanimously chosen by staff members and a representative of the Friends of Kottinger Creek in November 2001 to develop a master plan for the creek.

The creek meanders nearly the full length of the 14-1/2-acre Kottinger Park, which was built in the 1960s. The Friends of Kottinger Creek formed in early 2001, alarmed because the city had torn out a 30-foot willow tree that had sprouted along the creek. The tree was removed because the city was concerned about it impeding the flow of the creek, said Jim Wolfe, director of Parks and Community Services.

In November 2002, the Friends met with city staff and Wolfe Mason to request additional scientific studies, including hydrology, and biological and wetlands assessments. They also emphasized the need for a manual for city maintenance staff. The Friends ended up contacting one of the former sub-consultants to draw up a report for them.

"This hasn't gone well," said City Manager Deborah Acosta McKeehan. "I think it's like the classic joke when you get together to build a horse and end up building a camel."

Five members of the Friends voiced their concerns to the council.

"We are asking that the council decide that restoring Kottinger Creek to its 'dynamic equilibrium' is in fact the goal," said Cheri Puls of the Friends of Kottinger Creek. "We

believe it is an environmental mandate." She also asked that the Friends be able to speak directly to the consultant hired.

"To give free access to anybody, suddenly there's no leader and we're going to have mass confusion, as we did before," said Acosta McKeehan. "I have no problem with input, site meetings, but not free and open access." She added, "We've never been at odds over this project."

"There are a number of folks out there who have expressed that they like the way the park has been maintained before this issue came up," Wolfe explained this week. "What the council said is, 'We want to focus only on the creek and have it be a natural setting.'"

The motion, made by Councilwoman Jennifer Hosterman, was to open up the bidding process for the restoration of Kottinger Creek and make the goal to restore the creek to its dynamic equilibrium; to open bidding to firms that specialize in hydrology and stream restoration; and to include a maintenance manual.

"What the Friends are looking for is more in the realm of it being a natural area instead of a manicured facility," said Wolfe.